Art Therapy for Patients with Cognitive Disabilities: Clinical Effectiveness
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**About CADTH:** CADTH is an independent, not-for-profit organization responsible for providing Canada’s health care decision-makers with objective evidence to help make informed decisions about the optimal use of drugs, medical devices, diagnostics, and procedures in our health care system.
Research Questions
1. What is the clinical effectiveness of art therapy for patients with intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, or acquired brain injury?

Key Findings
One systematic review was identified regarding the clinical effectiveness of art therapy for patients with autism spectrum disorder.

Methods
A limited literature search was conducted on key resources including PubMed, The Cochrane Library, University of York Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD) databases, Canadian and major international health technology agencies, as well as a focused Internet search. Methodological filters were applied to limit retrieval to health technology assessments, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, randomized controlled trials, randomized controlled trials, non-randomized studies. Where possible, retrieval was limited to the human population. The search was also limited to English language documents published between January 1, 2012 and April 27, 2017. Internet links were provided where available.

Selection Criteria
One reviewer screened citations and selected studies based on the inclusion criteria presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Selection Criteria
| Population | Patients (any age) with intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, or acquired brain injury |
| Interventions | Art therapy |
| Comparator | Any alternative therapies or usual care (e.g., occupational therapy; physical therapy; speech language pathology; mentorship; No treatment |
| Outcomes | Clinical effectiveness (e.g., impact on cognitive function; social, motor, and verbal skills; mood and behaviour symptoms; quality of life) |
| Study Designs | Health technology assessments, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, randomized controlled trials, non-randomized studies |
Results
Rapid Response reports are organized so that the higher quality evidence is presented first. Therefore, health technology assessment reports, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses are presented first. These are followed by randomized controlled trials and non-randomized studies.

One systematic review was identified regarding the clinical effectiveness of art therapy for patients with autism spectrum disorder. No relevant health technology assessments, meta-analyses, randomized controlled trials, or non-randomized studies were identified.

Additional references of potential interest are provided in the appendix.

Overall Summary of Findings
One systematic review\(^1\) was identified regarding the clinical effectiveness of art therapy for children with autism spectrum disorder. This publication reviewed the literature from 1985-2012 and identified 18 case-studies describing the effectiveness of art therapy in children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder with normal to high intelligence. The authors concluded that art therapy improved self-image, strengthened communication and learning skills, and helped achieve a more flexible and relaxed attitude.\(^1\) Art therapy was also observed to reduce social communicative problems and restricted and repetitive behavior patterns.\(^1\)

References Summarized
Health Technology Assessments
No literature identified.

Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses

Randomized Controlled Trials
No literature identified.

Non-Randomized Studies
No literature identified.
Appendix — Further Information

Previous CADTH Reports

Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses

Alternate Population


Non-Randomized Studies
Alternate Intervention – Art Therapy (only principles thereof) Not Specified

Review Articles
